



## Kentucky Law Journal

---

Volume 2 | Issue 7

Article 2

---

1914

# Labor Politics

William C. Almstedt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/klj>



Part of the [Labor and Employment Law Commons](#)

**Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

Almstedt, William C. (1914) "Labor Politics," *Kentucky Law Journal*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 7 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/klj/vol2/iss7/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kentucky Law Journal by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact [UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu](mailto:UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu).

# Kentucky Law Journal

---

VOL. II.

LEXINGTON, KY., APRIL, 1914

No. 7

---

## LABOR POLITICS

---

BY WM. C. ALMSTEDT AND OTHERS

---

The growth of anti-capitalistic movements has lately assumed such large proportions that a survey of the situation, setting forth the doctrines and ideals of the various propaganda makes a timely theme.

The general reader is familiar with the terms, Trade Unionism, Socialism, Communism and Anarchism, but usually fails to differentiate between them. As a matter of fact, each is clearly distinguishable from the other. Each has a viewpoint, so fundamentally different from the others, that antagonism, even to the point of acrimony, naturally follows.

It seems advisable in an exposition on this topic, to give first a concise definition of the various "isms" which invariably appear in labor literature.

**SOCIALISM** is that theory of government which requires that the processes of production and distribution shall be regulated, not by competition, with self-interest for its moving principle, but by society as a whole for the good of society. It implies the subordination of the individual to the community, and puts public utility above private interest, assuming that all will receive their due, according to the measure of their capacity and willingness to perform the social duties assigned to each by public authority.

The essential features of individualism are, (1) private property in capital to which are added almost of necessity the rights of bequest and inheritance, thus permitting unlimited transfer and accumulation. (2) Competition, a rivalry between individuals in the acquisition of wealth, a struggle for existence in which the fittest survive. The greatest good of individualism is that it excites ingenuity and gives it scope and utilises it in a way that socialism would not so obviously do.

**COMMUNISM** is the theory which teaches that the labor and the income of the society should be distributed equally among all its members

by some constituted authority. The distribution, in practice, would be equal, under ordinary circumstances. If the weaker should be doing all he could, he would receive the same as the stronger, although the latter might be accomplishing several times as much. Furthermore, if the weaker was afflicted with ill-health, he should, according to the communistic view, receive enough more than the well comrade to make their pleasures the same. Equality of pain and pleasure would be the ideal. The first exposition of communism is to be found in Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," in 1516. One of the most complete experiments in communism was in Indiana, 1825-6. Within recent years, there have been practically no advocates of communism as defined above.

ANARCHISM denies the justice and expediency of both government and property, trying to overthrow these institutions by violence. From the view point of governmental activity, anarchism is at the opposite extreme from socialism. It is an anarchistic tenet that the law is always made for the oppression of the weak by the strong. This view of law is exactly the opposite to that held by the believers in State socialism, as will appear below. Anarchists are content to believe that every one would behave properly if governments with their forcible methods were abolished.

STATE SOCIALISM is a compromise between the present historical state and socialism. It would protect not all, but some only of the existing citizens, those, namely, whom their failure to obtain a satisfactory maintenance shows to stand in need of the assistance which the state is able to give. State Socialism, while retaining the two fundamental laws of the historic state—the right of private property and the institution of the family—it would yet leaven the existing state with a new spirit of socialism, not subverting the state, but using it as an instrument for carrying out uncertain particulars the socialistic ideal. It is, in a word, the extensive use of the strong arm of the state, to aid the weaker and restrain the stronger in the competitive struggle.

TRADE UNIONISM is the continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment. It is a settled part of its program to refrain from partisan politics, either to form a distinct party or to ally with any existing party. Trade unionism acquiesces in the distinction between capital and labor and merely desires good condition. A trade union is composed of men of one craft such as carpenters, barbers, etc. An industrial union, on the other hand, is composed of all the men of whatever craft, who are engaged in any one industry such as mining, brewing, etc.

SYNDICALISM partakes, to some extent, of both Socialism, Anarchism and Unionism, yet its adherents deny their belief in each of these.

Syndicalism is confined, for the most part, to France, where it originated less than a decade ago. It is characterized by (1) disbelief in the efficacy of the ballot and political action, (2) opposition to strong centralized governments, (3) advocacy of federated communal trade societies, arranged on a socialistic or communistic basis, (4) determination to use the strike and sabotage to further their ends (5) and international in ideal, denying their fatherlands.

The three groups which are of most practical concern at present are the Socialist party, the American Federation of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World. The remainder of the article will be given over to a brief description, principally the history and ideals, of each of these.

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

Nearly all of the great Utopian experiments were tried out in America, and four hundred such colonies were established in the United States, most of them in the period from 1825 to 1850. The Utopian movement inevitably had an effect upon the later Socialist movement, because the experiments were almost universally regarded as examples of Socialism. It took an unusually long time for the American people to see that Socialism was a political movement and had nothing to do with Communism in general. The Utopian idea remained uppermost in the minds of many American Socialists as late as 1897. Next came what is known as the German movement. This was caused by the revolutions in Europe and especially the German revolution of 1848, the exiles taking refuge in this country, on account of the democratic institutions of America and the low cost of land. Here they formed German organizations and for the next twenty-five years advanced practically all the Socialistic thought.

Following the crisis of 1873, and the consequent business depression, small Socialist parties were formed in New York, Chicago and Cincinnati, chiefly among German workingmen. Representatives of these parties met and organized the Workingmen's Party of the United States, which became in 1877, the Socialist Labor Party of North America. In 1880, they supported the "Greenback Party," withdrawing after the election. The only other alliance ever made with any other non-Socialist party was in 1886 when they supported the United Labor Party in the nomination of Henry George for Mayor of New York.

In 1886, the Socialists attempted to capture the American Federation of Labor by explaining to them the shortcomings of labor unions and instilling in them the ideals of Socialism. They also attempted to

get the unions to endorse the candidates of the Socialist Labor Party. Naturally, the leaders of the unions, who were attempting to unite all workers, irrespective of their political creeds, vigorously opposed these attempts. In 1896 the Socialist Labor Party started a rival organization to the A. F. of L., but this organization died after a brief existence, serving to demonstrate, however, the futility of attempting to base trade unionism upon political doctrines. Following this, the Socialist Labor Party itself spit up into two factions, one with Daniel De Leon at the head—being composed of those who had opposed the A. F. of L., the other of those who resented these tactics, and each spending most of its time denouncing the other.

In 1898 Eugene Debs and others organized the Social Democratic Party. Soon the anti-DeLeon Social Labor Party made overtures to the Social Democrats and supported Debs in the presidential election of 1900, polling 97,730 votes. In 1901, the faction which had supported Debs, organized the present Socialist Party. The party then grew rapidly and in 1910, they elected 40 mayors, including Emil Seidel, the Mayor of Milwaukee, also the first Representative of the Socialist Party in the Congress of the United States. In 1912 Debs polled 901,873 votes, approximately 6 per cent. of the total popular vote for president. The other prominent leaders are Harriman, Hillquit, Berger, Seidel, Irvine, Spargo, Engles and Walling.

The members of the Socialist Party are divided into two fairly distinct factions—the Orthodox and the Opportune. The practical or opportune socialist would take advantage of every local victory by attempting any feasible undertaking. For instance the "immediate demands" of the Milwaukee Socialists, in their municipal program, consisted chiefly of (1) The municipal ownership and administration of public-service corporations; (2) the erection of municipal abattoirs, markets and cold storage plants, (3) the abolition of the contract system on all public works in favor of direct employment, (4) an eight hour day in city works, (5) the relief of the unemployed by opening public works, (6) the strict enforcement of sanitary conditions in factories and tenement houses, (7) the establishment of free employment agencies and (8) adequate provisions for the education of children, including medical service, free text-books and free midday meals.

In Milwaukee, Los Angeles and Schenectady, the Socialists have achieved decisive local victories. However, they are divided as to the significance of these local successes. The opportune Socialists hold that their achievements in cities give them the preparatory training for their larger undertakings and at the same time demonstrate the excellence of the Socialist ideal. The orthodox Socialists, however, contend that a

taste of the spoils of office tends to transform ardent revolutionaries into mere reformers, and, in fact, strengthen the hold of the capitalist system on the country by making it somewhat more palatable. They hold that it is largely a waste of time to concentrate their attention on municipal elections when the real seats of power over property are in the state and national governments.

### THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR.

The American Federation of Labor was organized in 1881 as the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States of America and Canada and included 95 organizations, having a combined membership of 262,000. From 1881 to 1886 it declined, but in the latter year was reorganized under the present title and undertook a vigorous defence of trade unionism. From that time it grew steadily until by 1909 it had a combined membership of nearly 1,800,000.

The A. F. of L. is a confederation of various unions and local federations. It does not attempt to interfere with the affairs of its constituent unions, confining its efforts to the maintenance of a labor press, the enactment of favorable labor legislation, the influencing of public sentiment in favor of trade unionism, the amicable settlements of disputes between unions and the extension of the trade union plan of organization among skilled workmen.

The Federation does not take part in partisan politics. It endorses voluntary conciliation and defends the right to use the strike when necessary. Naturally it is opposed to compulsory arbitration.

During the time 1910-11, the labor organizations passed through a critical period, bitter opposition and adverse judicial decisions causing a marked decrease in the membership of some unions. However, the Barbers' National Union, the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, the Brewery Workers, the United Mine Workers, the Plumbers and Gas-fitters, the Street Railway Employees' Association and the International Typographical Union did not suffer from loss of members during the period of depression.

### THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD.

The organization known as the Industrial Workers of the World, was organized in 1904 by twenty-four men. It grew out of a long struggle between the Western Federation of Miners and the Mine Owners Association of Colorado. From twenty-four men in 1904 the I. W. W. numbered nearly 6,000 men in 1910, and its numbers are being continuously augmented wherever bad labor conditions exist.

At present the prominent leaders of the society are Wm. Haywood, Joseph Ettor, Arturo Giovanitti, Patrick Quinlan and Elizabeth Flynn. They claim to have a total membership of 70,000, embracing three national industrial unions and three hundred local unions.

The fundamental philosophy of the I. W. W. may be expressed in these words of their preamble: "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and machinery of production and abolish the wage system." Another of their tenets is, "To every man belongs the product of his own labor."

The I. W. W. have nothing in common with trade unions, since they do not recognize the right to contract on a wage system as is done by many of the trade unions. The I. W. W. look with scorn upon the slogan of the American Federation of Labor, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work."

The I. W. W., at the same time, puts no faith in the Socialist Party. In fact their constitution forbids them to enter into any alliance, direct or indirect, with existing political parties. This is because they have no faith in the ballot. The wrongs they complain of, it is their contention, are so deeply rooted, that political action would avail nothing. The leaders have, however, urged the members to vote so that they can control the policeman's club to the end that it will not be used on their skulls in future strikes.

The I. W. W. maintain also that they are not Syndicalists, in that they have a form of organization to correspond, cell for cell, with capitalist industry itself, and also because it seeks to build a new union on revolutionary lines rather than to attempt to change the present reactionary and out-of-date craft unions. It claims to have blended the practical features of socialism, anarchism, and syndicalism and yet to be distinct from all three.

The adherents of the I. W. W. are mostly unnaturalized foreign immigrants, disfranchised negro timbermen of Louisiana, railroad construction laborers and lumbermen of the Northwest. The textile industries of the East furnish the greatest number of the I. W. W. of the country.

### SABOTAGE.

A discussion of the ideals, doctrines and demands of the industrialist, is not complete without touching upon sabotage, one of his principal weapons. The term is so new in this country that few people know its meaning; so new even in Europe that it has been applied to all sorts of

private acts of vengeance and destruction. Accordingly, there is no one distinct conception of sabotage.

In general, sabotage consists in obstructing in all possible ways the regular process of production, in order to obtain any demand. It may express itself in slow work, in bad work, and even in the destruction of the machinery of production. The syndicalists, however, strongly condemn any act of sabotage which may result in the loss of life.

In France, where the use of sabotage is most highly developed, the word has a different meaning. It is not the destruction of machinery or any other form of violence. It is the organized hampering of production, by means of "withdrawal of efficiency" or the intermittent interference with work. This last would be practised by workers who quit their jobs for a while, then return to work till the plant is in normal working order, only to withdraw again without notice; repeating this at intervals till their object is attained. Or it may take the form of minute observance of rules as is often done on the railroads of France, wrecking ~~trains~~ with the time table. Sabotage is the industrialist's active weapon. The general strike is his passive violence.

---

## LABOR UNIONS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE LAW IN THE UNITED STATES

---

BY A. A. BABLITZ.

---

The American Colonies accepted the Common Law of England for the regulation of their affairs as a matter of right, and after the independence of the United States of America had been established so much of the common law as remained applicable to their changed conditions remained in full force and effect.

It was considered a conspiracy at Common Law for workmen to combine to raise wages and reduce hours of labor, and of masters to combine to depress wages; and for the purpose of making conditions of employment more severe for those employed. This view was obtained in the courts of law during the early period of the republic.

The earliest cases of record in which members of labor unions were prosecuted for conspiring to do such unlawful things as to increase wages and to limit the number of apprentices, are those of the Boot and Shoe Makers—1806—and of the Boot Makers—1809. In both of these cases the defendants were found guilty. The conspiracy doctrine of the